



SENATE NATURAL RESOURCES
ENTRUST NO. 4
DATE Jan. 14 2009
BILL NO. SB 93, SB 94

Senate Natural Resources Committee, Senators:

Gebhardt, Kelly (Ch)

Barrett, Debby (V Ch)

Curtiss, Aubyn

Hansen, Ken

Kaufmann, Christine

Keane, Jim

Perry, Gary

Peterson, Jim

Steinbeisser, Donald

Tropila, Mitch

Wanzenried, David

cc: Sonja Nowakowski, Staff

January 14, 2009

Re: SB 93 and 94

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on SB 93 and SB 94. The Clark Fork Coalition works to protect and restore the Clark Fork River watershed. We are comprised of 1,500 members who life, work and play within this 22,000-square-mile basin in western Montana.

The Clark Fork Coalition appreciated participating in the Water Policy Interim Committee meetings over the past year, during which we heard many discussions on the topics of the DNRC bills before you today. We applaud the DNRC's, the WPIC's, and this Committee's efforts to address the issues facing our Montana's treasured ground and surface water.

The Clark Fork Coalition supports SB 93 and 94. After two years observing the pros and cons of how the DNRC considers new groundwater appropriations in closed basins under HB 831 (passed in the 2007 Legislature) and the associated statute and rules, we believe these two bills will address some of the inefficiencies in the system. The proposed changes to the DNRC permitting process in closed basins—which comprise many areas in the Clark Fork River watershed—will hopefully clarify and perhaps streamline the process for those looking to appropriate new water supplies, while still allowing public process and transparency for existing water users. We hope that these changes will encourage developers and other new water users to apply for groundwater permits rather than opt toward unregulated and unmonitored exempt wells.

Thank you for your time. Please feel free to contact the Coalition with any questions or concerns. We look forward to working with the Committee as we continue the conversation on how best to address the challenges and opportunities facing Montana's water resources.

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Sincerely,

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